ETHNIC GROUPS AND CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND TURKEY
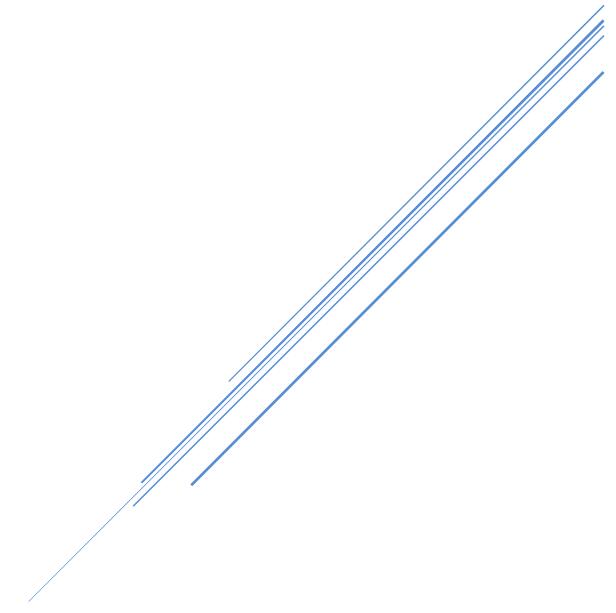
By Ilgam Abbasov, Hulya Delihuseyinoglu, Mariam Pipia, Sergey Rumyansev, Emil Sanamyan

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Introduction

For the South Caucasus republics and Turkey, the past century was a period of nation building and the creation of modern states, the national republics. For Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey the *age of extremes* was both shorter and longer of Hobsbawm's *short 20th century* (Hobsbawm, The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991 1994)[1]. With the end of the First World War and the dissolution of the Russian and Ottoman empires in 1917-1921, the *short 20th century* and the formation of the national republics begins in the South Caucasus and in Turkey.

The Turkish Republic replaces the Sublime Porte and Kemalism, the ideology underpinning the modern Turkish nationalism, is formed. Similarly, on the territory of the South Caucasus, according to Rogers Brubaker, three *quasi-national states* are formed after a short break between the Russian and Soviet empires. The three Soviet republics with their "fixed territories, names, legislations, administrative personnel, cultural and political elites" emerge (Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe 2000, 41). In each of them, as in the rest of the Soviet national republics, the nationalization of education, culture, and politics of memory were carried out with varying intensity (Martin 2001). Similar intense processes were taking places in Turkey, only without looking up to an "older brother" (Çağaptay 2006).

According to Hobsbawn, the collapse of the USSR in 1991 marking the end of the last century played a decisive role in the newest history of the South Caucasus republics. It had a less important, but still significant impact on Turkey as well. For Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, the post-Soviet period became one of transformation from quasi-national states to independent republics. It was the period of the discursive construction of the basic postulates of the modern *nationalizing nationalisms*, the time of creation of new national ideologies to replace the already unpopular Soviet myth of the "friendship of nations". For Turkish politicians, the end of the Soviet empire opened new opportunities for the construction of discourses on the unity of Turkic nations and the revision of the foreign policy towards the republics of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

New experiences shared by all four countries to varying degrees can be found in the nation-building processes and conflicts accompanying them, with which this short 20 century started. These were not only conflicts between the republics, whose political elites saw their borders rather differently, but also clashes within them (in 1918-1921). The century of nationalism was marked by a new type of conflict currently called ethnoreligious, interethnic, or ethno-national. In the 1920s, driven by the ideology of Kemalism in Turkey, and by the Soviet national policy in the South Caucasus, attempts were made at the ethnic and cultural homogenization of the population. The phenomena of ethnic boundaries, group and individual rights were reinterpreted once again. This was also the time when various attempts – successful or less – were undertaken to resolve conflicts.

Different types of intrastate conflicts, instances of critical rethinking of state ideologies and official nationalisms, processes of ethnic and cultural homogenization did not end when the short century ended. For all four states, the new XXI century (which, again according to Hobsbawm, started with the dissolution of the USSR) was marked with new extremes and conflicts, as well as with the quest for means and ways to their transformation.

The accumulated experience of transformation

This article discusses the implementation of various national and nationalistic policies, the creation of institutions regulating the relations between the dominant group and ethnic groups (so called minorities), as well as ideologies and discourses of national unity, tolerance, and multiculturalism (principles of inclusion and exclusion). This analysis is carried out in the context of conflicts. The religious aspect is of interest to authors only if the boundaries of an ethnic group and the conflict discourses are shaped also through its differences in faith or observance of rituals from the dominant group. The analysis also addresses the changes in the relevant official policies in the past two decades and their impact on the status of ethnic groups.

We suggest looking at this publication as an analytical overview based on academic research conducted by the authors at different times and integrated into one article to reach a wider range of readers. We also hope that this publication would contribute to the popularization of contemporary methodological and theoretical approaches and of a new language of conflict discussions fostering the formation of new frameworks conducive to positive transformation. It should also be emphasized that the discussion of conflict situations will be about different types of intrastate conflicts that are happening within state borders recognized by the international community. The authors will not be discussing inter-state conflicts.

What is common for Turkey and the South Caucasus republics?

The differences and similarities in the experiences of the four republics allow for an interesting comparative analysis. It is important to emphasize that despite the differences in institutions, national models, ideologies, discourses, etc., conflicts labeled as interethnic or waged between national communities have erupted and are still erupting in all four countries.

Both Turkish nationalism, Kemalism, and the Soviet national policy were aimed at constructing solidary ethno-national communities out of the diverse groups that were populating the new (quasi-) states that emerged on the world map. It was assumed that the unification under one Turkic nation, or under the Soviet ethno-national republics would put an end to the multiple nationalistic and religious conflicts.

In order to understand the peculiarities of these political projects, one should pay close attention to the discourses of official nationalisms. In the Turkish version of nationalism, it is practically impossible to separate the ethnic version from the civic one. Even though constructed in analogy with French civic nationalism, the assimilating Turkish nationalism strictly denies any possible internal linguistic and cultural diversity. In all major aspects (common history, territory, language, strict secularism, high degree of statism), the definition of a nation in the Kemalist ideology, even if more refined and expanded, is still astoundingly close to Stalin's definition[2]. Ethnic, linguistic, and cultural homogenization is the official goal of Turkish nationalism, as well as of the Soviet versions of Georgian, Armenian, or Azerbaijani nationalisms.

All these versions of nationalisms are also dogmatic. Formulated at approximately the same time in the 1920-30s, the *primordial and essentialist*[3] postulates of Kemalism and of the Soviet national policy became the highlights of national ideology and thought. These approaches took deep roots in the minds of both intellectuals and of ordinary people. Even now they successfully resist the attempts at critical rethinking. The image of a nation and the principles of solidarity formulated within the framework of these ideologies set the norm and determined the language of discussions that are very hard to transcend and replace with something new without questioning the entire system of loyalty to the *imagined communities*[4]. As a result, any attempts to transform these systems are percived as dangerous. In other words, all these systems (nationalims) successfully breed enemy images and demand absolute loyalty to

the ethno-nation. Any deviations from the offical canon are interpreted as betrayal of national interests. The latter are always seen to be above the individual and even the collective rights of the citizens.

What is different for Turkey and the South Caucasus republics?

The level of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity has been different for the four republics. Similarly, the resources for cultural and linguistic homogenization, as well as the construction of solidary to the imagined communities were different in Turkey and in the South Caucasus. In the Soviet version, largely inherited by post-Soviet Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, a strict hierarchy existed giving the highest status to the "titular nation" (the dominant group) which governed a Soviet republic. Correspondingly lower, but guaranteed statuses were allocated to ethnic minorities (groups). If an ethnic group was not recognized by the state and did not receive a status, then all its representatives became part of the dominant community. In statist ideology (as well as in Turkey), collective rights were always above those of an individual. In addition, the 20th century became the era of mass violent deportations and forced migration leaving a special mark on the composition of the populations in all four countries.

In the post-Soviet period, Armenia practically turned into a mono-ethnic state. The most significant ethnic group remaining are the small communities of Yezidi Kurds. In Azerbaijan, rapid ethnoreligious and linguistic homogenization is taking place even though certain diversity is maintained. Officially, the collective rights of Russians, Jews, Lezgins, Avars, Talysh, and a few other groups are guaranteed. Georgia remains the most ethnically diverse in the South Caucasus; homogenization is met with numerous difficulties, and the collective rights also remain the topic of constant discussions (especially for Azerbaijanis and Armenians). Turkey in the past two decades went a long way toward European integration; a lot has been done for the recognition of the collective rights of various groups (primarily of Kurds, Armenians, and Greeks), but conflicts are getting even more acute. Despite these differences, in all four cases, national civil societies, in essence, have never been constructed, and we are dealing with ethno-nations.

In terms of nation building, the last 20 years have been extremely important for all four states even though in different ways. One of the central developments has been the newfound rejection of strict secularism. In the last two decades, we have witnessed the process of religious institutions, traditions, and practices stepping out of margins and private spaces and into the public sphere as the rethinking of state regimes of secularity takes place.

In the words of Jose Casanova, it can be argued that none of the regimes is strictly secular and is living in accordance with the myth of secular neutrality. Today all four officially secular regimes promote the active circulation of religious symbols, moral principles, and discourses in the public sphere. The state regimes remain the key supporters of religious institutions, simultaneously engaging in various conflicts with networks and groups perceived to be illegitimate (radical). Often the contradictions and conflicts in the religious sphere coincide with the tensions between dominant communities and ethnic groups in each of these countries.

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In what follows, this analytical review is divided into four parts – one for each country. The authors describe the current situation, identify the main challenges, accomplishments, and the main factors impeding or supporting the creation of inclusive communities where all citizens can feel equal owners of their countries. When it comes to conflicts, the authors try to identify possible ways and prospects of their peaceful transformation. We discuss the peculiarities of the official national ideologies and discourses, as well as institutions that are there to monitor and/or control intergroup relations. The authors do not claim to be conducting a complete analysis, but see their goal in raising the most urgent and

complex issues and problems. At the end of the article, a comparative summary of the current state of affairs is presented.

Ethnic Groups and Conflicts in Armenia

Majority-minority relations: an overview

A recent discussion in a leading Armenian newspaper illustrated the informal restrictions faced by Armenia's ethnic minorities today. When asked about leadership prospects of Deputy Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Eduard Sharmazanov, a political commentator opined: "His prospects are quite questionable: in our country, everyone has a positive attitude towards national minorities, but I cannot imagine that in a country, where [more than] 95 percent of the population are ethnic Armenians, an ethnic Greek could become the leader. While I respect all ethnic groups living in Armenia, there are positions, such as those of the president or prime minister, where it is hard to imagine a Greek, Assyrian, Yezidi, Georgian, or Russian (Arevshatyan 2015)."

Since Armenia's independence, Sharmazanov is the first non-ethnic Armenian to rise to a senior position in a ruling party and the nation's parliament. Prior to his election in 2007, the only precedent for an ethnic minority member elected to the parliament was Nana Togoshvili, who was in the National Assembly between 1995 and 1999 as part of a short-lived pro-government women's party.

Members of Armenia's ethnic minority groups, particularly the Yezidis (Martirosyan 2014), have long complained about their lack of representation in Armenia's parliament. This might change now that the government-proposed constitutional reform package was approved in the December 6 referendum. That proposal includes a constitutional requirement for four out of 101 members of the parliament to be representatives of ethnic minorities (Galyan 2015). Comments by officials suggested the represented groups would include Yezidis, as well as Assyrians, Russians, and Greeks, but the selection and nomination process remains undefined and has already become a subject of controversy (Harutyunyan 2015) ("Hraparak": Poka neyasno, kakiye natsmen'shinstva budut predstavleny v parlamente Armenii 2015).

Political representation is of course only the tip of the iceberg as far as majority-minority relations within contemporary Armenia are concerned. At the basis of these relations is the prevalence of the dominant nationalist discourse that imagines Armenia as a national state for ethnic Armenians, rather than all who make their home in Armenia. This discourse, strengthened through nativization policies of the Soviet period, is primarily focused on who should be considered an ethnic Armenian (applied to people living in Armenia or not) and which of these ethnic Armenians should enjoy the rights of Armenian citizens, making the consideration of demographically marginalized ethnic communities largely an afterthought.

The sections below part considers the emergence of this nationalist discourse, its evolution through the practical implementation of the Armenian national project, and conflicts it has engendered and continues to produce in the country today.

A religious minority

Through the 19th century, the vast majority of people who identified themselves as Armenians were members of the Armenian Apostolic Church, living as a religious minority in the Muslim-majority Ottoman and Persian empires. Those Armenians who adopted Islam or joined other Christian churches were no longer considered Armenian by the Apostolic Church, the main institution involved in defining the Armenian identity at the time, and very few retained other identity markers, such as Armenian names or language. Like other churches of the Middle East, the Armenian Church generally guarded the

centuries-long status quo that saw Christians acquiesce to their politically restricted status afforded by the Sultan and the Shah.

In the late 18th and early 19th century this state of affairs began to be challenged through the Russian military successes in the wars against the Ottomans and Persians and the spread of secular nationalism from Europe. It is notable that the Armenian nationalist ideology was first articulated by activists through texts written and published in far-flung Diaspora communities of the time – the Catholic Armenian Mekhitarist congregations in Venice and Vienna and the mercantile Armenian communities of Madras and Calcutta. The dominant discourse of the time was not for an independent Armenian state, but rather a European or Russian protectorate for Armenians in the territories where Armenian kingdoms and principalities previously existed.

As estimated by historian George Bournoutian, at the time of the Russian conquest of the South Caucasus (1801-1828), the area that constitutes the modern Republic of Armenia was sparsely inhabited and had an 80 percent Muslim majority, with Armenians comprising the remaining 20 percent (Bournoutian 1980). There were also sizable Armenian populations outside the modern Republic of Armenia boundaries that also came under Russian control – in Karabakh and throughout future Azerbaijan, Georgia, as well as parts of the North Caucasus and elsewhere. By the 1870s, Yerevan, the eventual Armenian capital, still had a population of less than 12,000, and was roughly half-Armenian and half-Muslim. At the time, twice as many Armenians lived in Shusha and seven times as many lived in Tbilisi than did in Yerevan.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw a persistent process of ethnic homogenization of what today is Armenia with large numbers of non-Muslims, mostly Armenians, but also some Greeks, Assyrians, and Yezidis, resettling from the Ottoman and Persian empires within the Russian realm, and Muslim groups moving in the opposite direction. By 1897, Armenians became a 53 percent majority in the Yerevan governorate, with Muslims comprising much of the remainder. The overall population increased from about 165 thousand in 1831 to 830 thousand in 1897. Following the major population losses and displacements between 1914 and 1920, by 1926 the population of Soviet Armenia was 880,000 and 85 percent Armenian and about 10 percent Azerbaijani.

Thus, Armenians became a large majority in a politically distinct unit with a substantial geographic area, even though the majority of Armenians remained as minorities in other Soviet republics and elsewhere.

A secular republic

Pro-reform Armenian political parties first established in the Ottoman and Russian empires came to challenge the Church as the dominant Armenian institution, which had generally acted in concord with imperial powers. Turkish nationalists viewed this secular Armenian nationalism as a threat, unleashing large-scale violence against Ottoman Armenians since the 1890s. Following the 1915 genocide, roughly half of the Ottoman Armenians, making up one-third of all Armenians, were killed.

By 1918, with the collapse of the Russian empire, the first Armenian republic was established in the area around Yerevan left unoccupied by the Ottoman Turkish army. Turkish withdrawal saw an effort by the Armenian republic to establish sovereignty over the entirety of the Yerevan Governorate, the Kars Oblast and adjacent areas, all with substantial Muslim populations that in turn resisted this. Where Armenian forces succeeded, such as in Zangezur, Muslims were expelled; where they did not, such as in Nakhichevan, Shusha, and Kars, Armenians were forced out.

The 1920s Sovietization of the South Caucasus led to policies of ethnic *apartheid*. The Bolshevik Russian leadership decided to accept the military status quo as the basis for dealing with the multitude of territorial disputes. The embryonic national states of the South Caucasus served as a basis for the Soviet republics

on the condition that they in turn embrace Bolshevik leadership and tenets of socialism, including the ideology of the "friendship of people" and marginalization of religion.

In the next seven decades, the process of Armenia's ethnic homogenization continued apace with the share of ethnic minorities declining from 15 percent in 1926 to 10 percent in 1979 and under 5 percent by the 1990s. This was achieved through ethnic Armenian resettlement from other Soviet Republics, as well as the Middle East and Europe, and also through the resettlement of Azerbaijanis that concluded with the expulsion of the remaining Azerbaijani communities by 1990.

The "repatriation" programs for Diaspora Armenians were peculiar for the Soviet Union in that they did not target people who left the Soviet or pre-Soviet Russian Armenia, but survivors of the Ottoman Armenian massacres spread around the world, as well as the long-established Armenian community of Iran. More than 150,000 Diaspora Armenians came to settle in Soviet Armenia. By late 1940s, one of every ten Armenians in Armenia was a repatriate, effectively establishing a new majority-minority dynamic between native *hayastantsi* and newly arrived *akhpar*[5] populations that already then substantially sidelined the Armenian-ethnic minority relations within Armenia.

By 1970s and 80s, the repatriates were also contributing to growing rates of Armenian emigration to the West, with *akhpar* families reuniting with their relatives who stayed abroad, followed by *hayastantsis* now related to Diasporans through marriage.

A nation state

The Russian leadership's decision to dissolve the Soviet Union left Armenia and the other republics once again on their own. While the initial public support for independence was strong, Armenia was also coping with the disastrous consequences of an earthquake and the conflict with Azerbaijan that displaced about one-sixth of the Republic's population. The energy crisis and the end of the Soviet subsidies sent the economy into a free fall, resulting in massive emigration throughout the 1990s.

The government of the newly independent republic was also facing a political challenge from part of the Diaspora leadership that saw itself as the rightful heir of the Armenian independence movement in exile. Between 1992 and 1995, President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, himself a native of Syria whose family moved to Armenia in the 1940s, expelled Diaspora political figures, banned the Diaspora-led Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, Dashnaktsutyun) and mandated a constitutional prohibition on dual citizenship, intended to restrict Diaspora influence on Armenia.

Ter-Petrosyan's measures were undone by his successor Robert Kocharyan, who allied with the ARF, particularly on the topic of worldwide recognition of the Armenian genocide, as he sought and secured Diaspora investments to stem Armenia's economic decline. By 2005, Kocharyan also succeeded in amending the constitution to lift the ban on dual citizenship. At the same time, Kocharyan introduced his own safeguards against Diaspora influence, by eliminating public voting at Armenia's diplomatic missions and delaying citizenship applications from his Diaspora-born political opponents.

Since the early 2000s, Armenia has seen a fresh stream of repatriation/immigration, primarily from Iran and war-riven parts of the Middle East (including a small number of Yezidis and Assyrians), but also some from the West. While still relatively small and unstable – many Middle East repatriates see Armenia as a temporary stop in their effort to emigrate west – the total number of these new Armenian repatriates is comparable to the total number of Armenia's ethnic minorities (30-50,000).

These former Diaspora Armenians also have a greater role in the Armenian political mainstream than ethnic minorities do. Raffi Hovannisian, a U.S.-born politician who repatriated in 1990 and struggled to be granted citizenship well into the 2000s, won more votes in the 2013 presidential election than any challenger before him. Diaspora-born activists are also prominent among Armenia's civil society

movements, with "Electric Yerevan" protest movement as the latest among them. Possibly reacting to these "Western" influences, prominent figures in the Russian-Armenian community, themselves mostly natives of Armenia, recently hinted at plans to participate in Armenia's elections.

Another wrinkle for the Armenian national discourse has been introduced recently, with the reemergence of the previously Islamicized Turkish Armenians, who are challenging the original Armenian identity marker, the Christian religion.

The present-day majority-minority dynamics

Armenia's main majority-minority dynamics is not with the few ethnic minority communities resident and mostly well-assimilated or marginalized in Armenia. It is rather with those segments of the Armenian Diaspora communities who seek to be active in Armenia's political and economic life. While Armenia remains reliant on support from its Diaspora, the perception of their growing involvement in Armenian politics is bound to produce more friction. The deepening Russian-Western rivalry that is also reflected in Diaspora politics, as the two largest communities are in Russia and the U.S., is likely to be another contributing factor.

In 2013, the government of Serge Sargsyan acquiesced to Russian pressure to drop association talks with the European Union, and Armenia has since joined the Russia-led Eurasian Union, causing much consternation in some Diaspora circles. But Sargsyan has also resisted Russian encouragements to restrict Armenia's NGO laws along the lines of what Russia had done, at least in part because this would hurt the many Diaspora-funded charities working in Armenia. Sargsyan's reform of the Armenian constitutional framework closer to models in Georgia and Moldova, could also nudge Armenia towards a more decentralized form of government, where minority groups – both non-Armenian and Diasporic – might have a better opportunity at representation.

Ethnic Groups and Conflicts in Georgia

The exclusive national discourse at the end of the 1980s-1990s

Members of ethno-religious groups ("minorities") populating Georgia were left out of the new official national discourse that was constructed during the first decade of Georgia's independence. The core principle of the *nationalizing nationalism* was the confirmed priority position of the dominant group – ethnic Georgians (Brubaker, Nationalizing States in the Old "New Europe" – and the New 1996). Up until today, this approach negatively affects the creation of an inclusive and unified citizenry.

The policy toward ethnic groups is determined by the ideas of ethnic nationalism that are quite influential in the country. During the last stage of Perestroika, Georgian nationalism was manifested in the most radical form ever. In that period, the ideas of public figures of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century became widely popular and were interpreted through the prism of the Soviet experience (Losaberidze 1998, 8). Later there were attempts to depart from the constructs of that "romantic" period, and ideas of civic nationalism stirred more interest. However, the refusal to include members of ethnic groups into country's social-political and cultural processes led to an increased mistrust and alienation between them and the dominant community.

Ethnic groups and boundaries in Georgia

According to the recent census, 16 percent of the entire population in Georgia are "non-Georgians" (National Statistics Office of Georgia 2002). In addition to Abkhazia and South Ossetia (which are not under Tbilisi's control), Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and the Pankiski Gorge are the areas where

different ethnic groups reside in compact communities. Many cities also have a multi-ethnic population (Komakhia 2011 (in Georgian), 20).

The analysis that follows will be focused on the official policy, as well as the specific situation that the Armenian and Azerbaijani populations in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti are facing. The selection of these specific cases is justified by a number of factors. First of all, the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities are the biggest ones and constitute 12 percent of the total population (National Statistics Office of Georgia 2002). In addition, in the districts of Bolnisi and Marneuli in Kvemo Kartli and in the districts of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda of Samtskhe-Javakheti, Azerbaijanis and Armenians are the absolute majority. It is widely believed that these communities have the lowest level of civic integration (BTKK - Policy Research Group 2008, 26). It is important to also underline that both in Kvemo Kartli and in Samtskhe-Javakheti, episodes of tensions have occurred previously, which increases the attention paid to these regions in the context of Georgia's national security discourse.

The significance of intergroup ethnic boundaries can be attributed to various pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet practices. However, a major importance is attributed to the national policy of the USSR, which in many cases contributed to the construction, consolidation and upholding of such boundaries. The Soviet practice of territorialization of the nations, together with the provision of certain collective privileged treatment in the areas of language and culture, implied the existence of a relatively rigid group status hierarchy, which to a certain degree was sustained in Georgia also after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The state, ethnic groups, and conflcits

Georgia's national policy during Zviad Gamsakhurdia's presidency (1991-1992) (Reisner 2009) was radical and ultra-right conducted under the motto "Georgia for Georgians". Using Lowell Barrington's classification, the official nationalism of this period in Georgia can be classified as sovereignty-protecting nationalism (Barrington 2006). Gamsakhurdia was guided with some "mystical" vision of a united Georgia that was based on a primordial understanding of the nation. He viewed ethnic groups as a force endangering the national unity, and thus the protection of Georgia's sovereignty *a priori* led to the marginalization of these groups.

Georgia's political elite viewed the fears and "inconvenient" aspirations of the members of the ethnic groups as artificial and instigated by the central Soviet government (Suny 1994, 325). However, the problem was that due to the Soviet national policy, Georgia was an asymmetrical and hierarchical state. In such an environment, the official ideology of the "purity of the nation" and the growing popularity of the ethno-national discourses stimulated the growing popularity of separatist ideas and movements that started brewing in places of compact residence of the representatives of different ethnic groups.

In cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, these factors led to *de facto* territorial disintegration (Nodia, Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia 1997). The Georgian government's discriminatory national policy toward the Abkhaz and the South Ossetians led to tensions in Kvemo Kartli and Smatskhe-Javakheti – areas of compact residence of ethnic minority communities. Demands to create autonomies were voiced. There were cases of standoff between Georgians on one side and ethnic activists representing their groups[6] and sympathizers of nationalistic organizations on the other side[7]. Acute and open conflict was avoided, but the tension in the relations became a defining factor in the further consolidation of ethnic and religious group boundaries.

Eduard Shevarnadze's presidency (1995-2003) (Wheatley 2005) (Jones, Georgia: A Political History Since Independence 2012) was marked by a departure from the radical nationalistic rhetoric at the face of military conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He is credited for defining Gamsakhurdia's policy as "backwoods fascism" (Nodia, The Polyethnicity of Georgia: The Fact, the Attitude Towards the Fact and Thoughts Political Strategy 2003 (in Georgian), 71), as well as for easing the tensions in Kvemo

Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti. The nationalism of that period became a tool for strengthening the state and the further nationalization of the republic.

Shevarnadze's "institutional" nationalism was based on the reinterpretation of history and the concept of citizenship by ethnic Georgians and minorities. On the official level, the integrative aspects among the citizens were emphasized instead of the differences (Jones, Georgia: Nationalism from under the Rubble 2006, 264). Ethnic groups lost their status of "guests" that the former government had informally ascribed to them (Nodia, The Polyethnicity of Georgia: The Fact, the Attitude Towards the Fact and Thoughts Political Strategy 2003 (in Georgian), 71). At the same time, targeted state policy was non-existent, and the government's actions in this area were minimalistic.

On the one hand, Shevarnadze's government created a basic constitutional framework for the development of a multiethnic democratic society; on the other hand, the Georgian parliament did not adopt a single important piece of legislation to regulate group relations (Nodia, The Polyethnicity of Georgia: The Fact, the Attitude Towards the Fact and Thoughts Political Strategy 2003 (in Georgian), 260). In addition, according to the Constitution adopted in 1995, the state recognized "the unparalleled role of the Georgian Orthodox Church" (Konstitutsiya Gruzii ot 24 Avgusta 1995 g. n.d.). Such nuanced relations between the state and the church even today create an environment where the majority of the population does not perceive the adherents of various Christian denominations and other religions as equal citizens.

Azerbaijanis and Armenians of Georgia were left out from the development of the post-Soviet Georgian national identity. At the same time, the government tried cooperating with the representatives of the political and/or economic elite of the ethnic minorities (Nodia, The Polyethnicity of Georgia: The Fact, the Attitude Towards the Fact and Thoughts Political Strategy 2003 (in Georgian), 74), with an aim to soothe any potential source of tensions. Ethnic patchiness of the population was considered dangerous, and denial to openly discuss this question at the political level was seen as the way out (Nodia, The Polyethnicity of Georgia: The Fact, the Attitude Towards the Fact and Thoughts Political Strategy 2003 (in Georgian), 72). The negative attitude towards the political recognition of the collective social and cultural rights of ethnic groups led to the strengthening of isolationist tendencies instead of advancing towards a single political community. The country, in fact, was divided between the dominant group and the significantly smaller ethnic groups. None of them considered themselves members of a unified citizenry.

From Mikheil Saakashvili to the "Georgian Dream": the legislative framework

When in 2003 the United National Movement headed by Mikheil Saakashvili (2003-2012) came to power (Karumidze and Wertsch 2005) (Cornell 2013), this lead to a fundamental reassessment and revision of the official policy towards ethnic groups. Several state agencies were created in 2004 with an agenda to protect minority rights. Within the Ombudsman's office a "Council on Ethnic Minorities" was created. Georgia acceded to all fundamental international legislation on the protection of human rights. In 2005, the Georgian parliament ratified the "Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities", which implies acceptance of the burden of responsibility for the preservation of ethnic identity and the creation of conditions for the realization of collective rights. In Georgia's first ever "National Security Concept", where there is a clear shift to liberal and civic nationalism, one of the fundamental interests of the state is the achievement of national unity and civil accord:

"Georgia ensures the protection of the interests, rights, and freedoms of all ethnic and religious groups residing in the country. For this purpose, Georgia is building a society based on the principles of pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and non-discrimination. Georgia strives to foster respect for the

Constitution among its citizens and to ensure their self-identification as citizens of Georgia (Kontseptsiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Gruzii (2005 g) - polnyy tekst 2015).

The 2012 "National Security Concept" also includes clauses on the protection of minority rights and underlines the importance of their participation in the social and political life of the country (Kontseptsiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Gruzii (2005 g) - polnyy tekst 2015).

During Saakashvili's time in office Georgia also adopted the "Concept on Tolerance and Civil Integration" one of the central principles of which, along with the recognition of the equality of all citizens and non-discrimination, was the balance between civil integration and the protection of the ethnic groups identities (Concept on Tolerance and Civil Integration 2009 (in Georgian)). There was an increasing emphsis to present Georgia as a traditonally tolerant multi-ethnic state. A civil and inclusive concept of the Georgian nation was being advocated (Sabanadze 2013, 87). Nevertheless, along with this policy, the speeches and public statements of President Saakashvili, who emphasized the need to restore the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, were often filled with ethno-nationalist rhetoric. The tacit union and agreement with the Georgian Orthodox Church remained unchanged (International Crisis Group 2006, 11).

In 2015, the new Georgian government led by the "Georgian Dream"[8] adopted the "State Strategy of Civil Equality and Integration", as well as an action plan for the years 2015-2020. The strategic objectives include the "equal and adequate participation of ethnic minorities in the civic and political life of the country, ensuring equal social and economic conditions" (State Strategy of Civil Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020 2015).

Summarizing the legislative activity of the last two political regimes, it is obvious that there is no discrimination of ethnic groups on the legislative level with a caveat that the legislature guarantees primarily *negative liberty*, which implies the removal of barriers for the collective exercise of rights and freedoms. However, this approach does not create sufficient conditions permissive for the effective realization of individual civil rights. This fact still is and can be the future reason of indirect discrimination.

Ethnic groups in Georgia: Azerbaijanis and Armenians

The unwillingness of Georgia's political elite in the 1990s to integrate the members of ethnic groups in the process of the construction of the Georgian statehood resulted in the perception of ethnic asymmetry and civil alienation as a given status quo. Among Azerbaijanis and Armenians of Georgia the phenomenon of alienation from the dominant society can be seen on several levels.

The socio-cultural separation of the members of these groups from the dominating Georgian group is worth a mention. In fact, the country is divided into several cultural areas that have very little interaction with each other. One of the reasons is the extremely low level of horizontal communication between Georgians on the one side and Azerbaijanis and Armenians on the other, which is often replaced by vertical communications. It is important to note that all sides recognize the legitimacy of such an unequal hierarchical style of relations (Dundua and Abashidze 2009 (in Georgian), 133).

Azerbaijanis' level of integration into the dominant socio-cultural tradition is much lower than that of Armenians due to their religious affiliation (Dundua and Abashidze 2009 (in Georgian), 147). This however does not result in an open conflict. At the same time, the privileged position of the Georgian Orthodox Church and the high level of religious practice among the dominating Georgians is an additional obstacle for the integration of Muslim Azerbaijanis (Dundua and Abashidze 2009 (in Georgian), 147).

The Armenian community protests more often than Azerbaijanis (International Crisis Group 2006, 6). The reasons of discontent are different. During the protests in 2005-2006, Armenians claimed that in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda Armenian judges were being fired and were demanding to use the Armenian language in judicial and any other official business practices.

In addition, mass demonstrations and political meetings were organized by Samtskhe-Javakheti activists, whose demands included autonomy within Georgia for Samtskhe-Javakheti and Tsalka Armenians, the use of Armenian in public administration in Armenian-populated municipalities, an end to the settlement of ethnic Georgians from the other parts of the country in Samtskhe-Javakheti, and improved Armenian representation in state institutions (International Crisis Group 2006, 4).

Since 2004, protests of the Azerbaijani community have centered mainly on unequal land privatization. Ethnic Azerbaijanis, predominantly farmers, claim Georgians were favored when land was privatized (International Crisis Group 2006, 6). Some demonstrations have led to violence.

Armenians and Azerbaijanis living in Georgia see different solutions to the current situation. While for Armenians gaining autonomy would resolve all their problems, most of Azerbaijanis do not consider this option. Since Azerbaijanis are not represented in the power structures, the autonomy would not give them any significant advantages. As a result, Azerbaijanis prioritize representation in state structures.

It is important to note the political and civil dimensions of alienation between Azerbaijanis and Armenians on the one side and dominant Georgians on the other. Despite the fact that national minorities often point out the low level of corruption and intensive state-building in Georgia as positive developments, their own access to participation in the public and political life of the country remains constantly low.

Members of ethnic groups living in Georgia are not active political subjects. This is the conclusion that results from the analysis of the level of representation of these groups in the country's power structures. The 1992-1995 convocation parliament had the smallest number of Armenians and Azerbaijanis represented (BTKK - Policy Research Group 2008, 18). While in the following convocations their percentage has increased, often their presence in the parliament is only formal. Their activities are limited to meetings with the political leadership of the country in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti or being included in the state delegations during official visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan. As far as the local administration is concerned, Armenians are well represented in the governing bodies of the two municipalities were they constitute the absolute majority, while there are no Azerbaijanis among the heads of even those municipalities where they are the majority of the population (International Crisis Group 2006, 12-13).

To summarize the above-mentioned in simple terms it can be stated that during different periods the political elite of the country considered Azerbaijanis and Armenians of Georgia as a resource to consolidate power and control over Georgia (Dundua and Abashidze 2009 (in Georgian), 133). A number of studies suggest that Armenians and Azerbaijanis living in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti tend to support the ruling political parties (BTKK - Policy Research Group 2008, 18) regarding this as their loyalty to the state which they consider their political homeland.

The low level of knowledge of the state language is considered to be the main reason that leaves national minorities out of the mainstream political and cultural processes[9]. This is a significant obstacle to the dissemination of information about events in the country and results in a secluded lifestyle within the boundaries of own group. The low level of interest and participation in socio-cultural and political processes, the compact residence in the border areas affects the perception of the regions of Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti as potential spots of internal conflicts where third parties can be involved. Often political analysts underline that these regions can be used by external powers (including the friendly

ones) to influence internal and external policies of the Georgian authorities.

On the official level, the Georgian policy is aimed at overcoming the boundaries between dominant Georgians and ethnic groups. However, in the post-Soviet period, these boundaries are becoming even more rigid. This is the result of a lack of a systemic approach in the official policy, which does not contribute to the creation of more or less unified citizenry-based society. Even though the radical state ethnic nationalism of the 1990s is replaced with a liberal discourse, the involvement of ethnic groups in political, social, and cultural processes remains minimal.

Ethnic Groups and Conflicts in Azerbaijan

From "friendship of nations" to "tolerance"

The Sovetization of Azerbaijan began with the arrival of 11th Red Army to the region in April 1920 and marked the beginning of the era of the "friendship of nations". Azerbaijanis (Turkic people) became the "titular nation" of the republic. At the same time, all the citizens of the Azerbaijani SSR were given their "obligatory ascribed status" – a personal ethno-national identity indicated in a number of official documents and in particular in the notorious 5th field of the Soviet passports (Kostyrchenko 2009).

After Azerbaijan's independence there was a need to create a national policy that would be different from the Soviet one. This resulted in the new stage of nationalization that bore the motto of the transformation from the totalitarian-authoritarian Soviet regime to a democratic rule. All these events mandated the revision of the previous schemes, relationships, and statuses. The question is whether the transformation of the Soviet legacy of the national policy into a qualitatively new one in line with the proclaimed course of democratization of political and social life was successful.

Changes did take place. However, they did not affect the basic perceptions of a personal ethno-national identity, and the changes in the society in terms of ethnic groups ranking were insignificant. The core characteristic of any citizen of Azerbaijan remained their personal ethno-national identity, or their "biological nationality". Similar to the Soviet period, the republic did not belong to all its citizens, but first and foremost was "the state of and for a particular nation" (Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe 2000, 27).

At the same time, certain changes should be highlighted. For example, public discussions on "national ideology", or, more precisely, on the content of post-Soviet nationalism, again became possible. These were discussions on whether or not this nationalism should be exclusive or inclusive, ethnic or civic. During the Soviet era, such discussions were impossible. However, in this new environment, these discussions recreated a quasi-Soviet civilian model. In the Soviet model, the ethno-nations (or peoples) were discursively united into yet another category of a supranational Soviet people.

In this same spirit, certain scientists and politicians began constructing the idea of the *Azerbaijani nation* as a community based on the co-citizenship of all people in the country, however maintaining the obligatory group statuses and the personal ethno-national identity recorded in number of documents (Rumyansev 2011). As a result, the rejection of any individual, even symbolically important practices does not imply the revision of the overall system of perceptions.

Post-Soviet nationalism

For more than two decades Azerbaijan has been carrying out programs of the post-Soviet nationalization of the state. Throughout this time, they underwent quite significant changes, but from the mid-1990s and, more so from the early 2000s, these programs are strongly tied to the post-Soviet nationalistic ideology, to "Azerbaijaniness" or "Azerbaijanism" (in Azerbaijani *Azərbaycançılıq*).

This is a rather contradictory ideology, and so far has been discussed only in a few dozens of scattered texts. Its main author is considered to be the former president Heydar Aliyev (1993-2003) during whose presidency it gained an official status. A number of politicians and officials, social scientists, journalist, writers, and poets authored a variety of texts with an attempt to interpret or further develop this ideological doctrine[10].

The core tenets of Azerbaijanism can be summarized as follows: Azerbaijanis are "a people with an ancient history" and "with a national authentic identity" who "have made a valuable contribution to the world civilization", and are also a state-forming group. The political regime that is ruling in Azerbaijan since 1993 (since Heydar Aliyev first came to power) is the only guarantor of stability in the country. According to the main author of this ideology:

"We, Azerbaijanis are united by our national identity, historical roots, national and spiritual values, by our national culture – literature, arts, music, poetry, songs, customs, and traditions of our people. […] All these factors unite us. The idea of Azerbaijaniness unites us. […] Azerbaijaniness means maintaining our national identity, preserving the national and spiritual values, and at the same time enriching them through synthesis and integration with universal values, and ensuring the development of every individual" (Aliyev 2001).

This excerpt from president Heydar Aliyev's speech delivered at the First Congress of World Azerbaijanis in 2001 is considered the foundation of the concept of Azerbaijanism. It is clear that the president was addressing all ethnic Azerbaijanis regardless of their citizenship, but not the citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan. At the same time, in the later interpretations of this speech, we can see attempts to introduce some ideas of civic nationalism into the ideology of Azerbaijanism. However, all such attempts center on the essentialist ideas of tolerance of the Azerbaijani nation and the description of the population of Azerbaijan as multiethnic and divided into different ethnic groups.

Discourse of tolerance

If during the Soviet years, interethnic relationships were described in the context of the "friendship of nations", nowadays they are dominated by the discourse on the tolerance of the Azerbaijani people. In the post-Soviet discourse of tolerance, the concepts of the "titular nations" and the "Soviet people" came to a logical end.

Similar to the Soviet period, the state is perceived to belong to one dominating ("titular") group, ethnic Azerbaijanis. The statuses of all other ethnic groups ("minorities") are subject to discussion. In all cases however, all those who are not ethnic Azerbaijanis are entitled to citizenship first and foremost because of the tolerance of the dominant group. In their turn, the former must demonstrate unwavering "gratitude" and loyalty to the unwaveringly tolerant dominant group. This official discourse of tolerance is in a clear contradiction with the state law on citizenship.

The official legislation does not reflect the real attitudes and the state of relationships in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. The law on citizenship is a product of modern liberal legal establishment, while the widespread and widely popular discourse of tolerance is a prime example of the Soviet essentialist tradition in defining nation and ethnicity.

This discourse defines that Azerbaijani Turks are tolerant by nature inherited through "ethnic genes" and "blood". Such "genetically congenital tolerance" becomes a certain guarantee of conflict-free coexistence of different ethnic groups within Azerbaijan. All conflicts are interpreted through various conspiracy theories and theories of political manipulation, as well as essentialist myths on "historic enemies". With the help of these interpretative models, Azerbaijanis remain unchangeably tolerant in all

situations and under all conditions since one cannot change genetics. This version stipulates that conflicts are possible only because of intolerance of the other groups.

Discourses of threat

The development of these discourses will be discussed on the example of the Talysh and Lezgins. In the routine life, "intergroup" and identity boundaries between Lezgins, the Talysh, and Azerbaijanis are blurred. However, at the same time, the representatives of all these three groups witness a process of politicization of ethnicity.

For example, in one of his articles the political scientist and a member of the parliament of the last two convocations Rasim Musabekov aims not only to explain the conflicts that have already occurred, but also to speculate about the dangers of "potential conflicts" – those that could have occurred, but were avoided, or did not escalate to open hostilities. Musabekov's political analysis is based on one basic premise that the mere existence of different ethnic groups with the boundaries of one country essentially implies the existence of a serious conflict potential. At the same time, these ethnic groups are discursively defined to be different highlighting the differences rather than similarities. An analysis developed from such a premise inevitably implies a search for why ethnic conflicts happened or why it was possible to avoid them.

In this context, Lezgins being a "Dagestani-language speaking ethnic group" that is different from Turkic Azerbaijanis is perceived as an unstable "risk group". They can become a "weapon" in the hands of ill-intentioned external forces, particularly since as an ethnic group they are divided by a state border. In this case, a discourse on the threat to territorial integrity emitting from "smaller ethnic groups" is being constructed. According to Musabekov:

"…in some political circles in Russia, there is a temptation to take advantage of popular discontent among Lezgins that is due to current difficulties [i.e. a single ethnic group is divided by a state border] and instigate anti-Azerbaijani and separatist sentiments that can be further used as a leverage against Azerbaijan. […] It even got to the point of terrorist acts. However, provocations aimed at stirring up Azerbaijani-Lezgin confrontation have not succeeded. The Russian power structures apparently realized the threat that Lezgin nationalism carries for the stability of the Republic of Dagestan. […] Through joint effort [of Azerbaijan and Russia] the situation on both banks of the Samur river [state border passes along this river] was stabilized and currently does not pose a threat of getting out of control (Musabekov 2009, 41-42).

Dominant groups (those to whom the state belongs) are assigned a leading role in overcoming conflicts (that are *a priori* possible when two or more ethnic groups live side by side). The absence of conflict is first and foremost the achievement of the policies of the dominant group. A secondary role is also assigned to the "religious commonalities and century-long good neighboring traditions", the bilingualism common in the Lezgin community, mixed marriages between Lezgins and Azerbaijanis are pushed to the background.

Special attention has to be paid to the role that is assigned to the "small ethnos" in the threat discourses. Viewed as a collective actor, they are either manipulated and pushed to instigate conflict, or are "pacified" in cases when the dominant groups are not interested in conflict. "Pacification" takes forms of "positive reinforcements" such as primary education in the native language, seats in the local administration and in the parliament, as well as harsh political actions such as bans on nationalistic organizations, halt of the policies motivating radicalism, and so on. In other words, it can include all the benefits and restrictions that were in fact developed as part of the Soviet national policy.

It is clear that this approach though popular discourse portrays an ethnic group or a "small ethnos" as a collective actor that can easily be manipulated politically by other "big ethnic groups" from neighboring states. In all cases this "small ethnos" is a "risk group" and an obstacle (small or big) on the way of the cultural, linguistic, and territorial homogenization and stability of a country. This "risk" (threat discourse) heightens if the given ethnic group lives as a compact community along the border, especially if the "small ethnos" is perceived to be divided by a state border.

Following the pattern of this approach, we can also see a number of significant similarities between Lezgins and the Talysh. The latter live as compact communities along Azerbaijan's southern borders, while Lezgins are in the northern part. And again, within the threat discourse they are also represented as an ethnic group divided by a state border.

"The Talysh live in the south-eastern part of Azerbaijan mainly in the regions of Lankaran, Astara, and also partly in Masally and Lerik. Nowadays many Talysh live in Baku and Sumgait. […] The Talysh are deeply integrated into the Azerbaijani nation. The traditions, culture, and way of life of the Talysh are not very different [from those of Azerbaijanis]. There are also no historical records of ethnic clashes between the Talysh and Azerbaijanis. However, the revival of the Talysh identity on the background of the Turkic nationalism when Azerbaijan was fighting for independence as a republic, contributed to tension in this part of the country. […] As of today, despite the dire social-economic conditions, the situation in the southern part of Azerbaijan is stable and is under the full control of the government. Nevertheless, Iran, where more than 100 thousand Talysh reside, is attempting to use zealous Shiism and the language similarities with the Talysh to increase its influence over Azerbaijan. […] However, they can't claim any visible successes" (Musabekov 2009, 43-44)[11].

In the threat discourses, as well as the portrayal of the country divided into different ethnic groups, the status ranking of groups becomes very clear. It is important to stress that the voices from these ethnic groups are not included in this discourse analysis. Usually this is a macro level analysis that describes an unchangingly unified groups presenting it as a collective body.

Soft and hard lines

The political regime in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is trying to maintain ethnic boundaries and personal ethnic identities. This policy has two approaches. The first one can be described as a "hard line" control over the "small ethne" with an aim to curb any real or, more often, imaginary ideas of separatism and any other form of disloyalty to the political regime. The threat discourse is being constructed along these lines. The "small ethne" are regarded as different from the "dominating" Turkic Azerbaijanis, and, to a certain degree, are a threat to the unity of the country. As part of this approach direct pressure on them is also possible (interdiction of ethnic organizations, arrests of ethnic activists, and so on).

The second approach is the "soft line". In this case, the operations of ethnic activists and organizations that are ready to demonstrate their loyalty toward the ruling regime and the "dominant ethnos" are being supported. This allows the government to present itself as tolerant, and ethnic activists as unchangeably loyal and "grateful" to the regime and the "dominant ethnos" for their tolerance.

The difference between these two approaches is less important than the fact that in both cases, the government and ethnic activists maintain and reconstruct the ethnic boundaries, even in cases where they were becoming obsolete.

The discourses of threat and of tolerance play a significant role in the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. They feed on the personal ethnic identity and status boundaries between the "titular nation/ethnos" and "small nations/ethnic groups" that were institutionalized as part of the Soviet national policy. Scientists

in the fields of social sciences and humanities, media representatives together with politicians are active participants in the construction of these discourses.

To summarize, the policy of solidifying ethnic boundaries and identities leads to their politicization and maintenance (and not mitigation) of the conflict potential within the country. Politicians, scientists, and the mass media are the primary creators of the conflict discourse. It is rooted in the discursive division of the country's population into different ethnic groups, something that has been practiced since the Soviet times, as well as in the essentialist discourse on the tolerance of the "dominant ethnos".

Ethnic Groups and Conflicts in Turkey

National identity construction in the Turkish Republic

The Turkish Republic was among the nation states that emerged after the collapse of the empires in the era of the *apogee of nationalism* (Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780 1990). The aim of the political elite at that time was to create a nationhood for the newly-established Republic, and the political and national units had to be made congruent to realize this aim (Gellner 1994). During the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, it was already possible to see patterns of nationalism in various forms including aspects of Turkish ethno-nationalism. However, the policies of ethnic and cultural homogenization of the population started during the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress in the early 1900s gained a systematic form and pace especially after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923[12]. The national identity construction that started in the 1900s and intensified with the establishment of the Republic in 1923 has not been completed until today. This process has been causing the intrastate conflicts between the Turkish state and its ethnic groups. This has been the result of the persistence of the discourses of ethno-cultural homogenization of the population embedded within the state institutions towards the ethnic and religious groups ("minorities") despite the changes in the time period and/or context. That's why the history of the Turkish Republic has also been a history of conflicts.

The explicit aim of the domestic policy of the Turkish Republic since its establishment has been to transform its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious population into a homogenous nation through its modernization project and that was reflected in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (Kirişçi, Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices 2000, 1). The modernization project led by the Kemalist elites aimed to reform almost all areas of the social and political life in order to transform the debris of the Ottoman Empire into a modern republic (Yeğen, Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question 2007). They adapted the notions of nation-state, national identity and industrial economy that were seen as the prerequisites of the modern republic (Keyman and İçduygu 2013). Thus, while creating this homogenized nation-state, a national identity based on the characteristics of the one particular ethno-religious group – Turkishness and Islam – was built.

Since Turkishness and Islam (Muslimhood) were regarded as the spiritual ground for the production of the new modern national identity of the Republic, the citizens who did not define themselves through such frames could not enjoy equal rights (Yeğen, Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question 2007). Although the citizenship definition seemed inclusionary and reflective of the diversity of the society, in practice, it did not function as such. There was a big difference between the substantive and formal citizenship of different groups (Kirişçi, Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices 2000). Those who were considered ethnically non-Turkish were repressed and denied the public expression of their cultural, political, and ethnic differences (Akman 2004). The state did not recognize the cultural and ethnic diversity of the population and the rights of different individuals and groups stemming from such diversity.

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Turkey recognized only its non-Muslim minorities with the Lausanne Treaty. Jews, Armenians, and Greeks were given the minority status, thus the institutions that could sustain their culture and language continued to exist (Kirişçi, Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices 2000, 1). However, it is not a coincidence that only non-Muslims were recognized as a minority and granted cultural rights by the treaty. The state considered the non-Muslim groups as "others", who were not part of the new national identity, thus did not belong to the new nation (İçduygu, Şule and Soner 2008).

In order to create an ethnically and religiously homogenous nation-state, the Turkish Republic relied on the tested tools of extermination, assimilation, and expulsion. In this regard, the nation-building process went hand-in-hand with the nation-destroying practices (Kymlicka 1999, 73). Although the status of the non-Muslim minorities was recognized in the Lausanne Treaty, they were not shielded from those practices. The major examples of expulsion and extermination were the exchange of the Greek population of Anatolia with the Turkish population of Greece in 1923-1924 following the Lausanne Treaty, and the gradual obliteration from the official memory the existence of the Armenian population of Anatolia that greatly diminished in numbers in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide of the pre-republican era[13]. In this regard, it can be said that the Republic wanted to eliminate the populations that could not be assimilated into the new national identity because of their religion.

On the other hand, the rest of the populations, which did not fit into the national identity ideal, faced assimilation policies, starting from the early period of the establishment of the Republic. Unlike their non-Muslim counterparts, Muslim populations were granted the same rights as the majority on the condition of accepting their ethnicity as Turkish (Ergil 2000). Instead of expelling or exterminating them, the state preferred to assimilate those populations by eradicating their cultural characteristics (mainly linguistic), which could hinder their full integration into the Turkish ethno-national identity. Since Muslimhood was regarded as a key component of Turkishness, all Muslim were seen as prospective Turks (Yeğen, "Prospective-Turks" or "Pseudo-Citizens": Kurds in Turkey 2009).

This ideological nation-building process conducted by the state and its elites affected the perception of the various groups in the society of each other and therefore the overall coherence of the society tremendously. The conflicts in Turkey, therefore, are not only those that are violent and visible. The conflicts have been present in a protracted and latent form and embedded within the institutions through which the polarization of the society became inescapable.

The Armenians and the Kurds in Turkey

Today Turkey faces two major conflicts related to its nation-building policies. The first one is the conflict between the Turkish state and Greeks and Armenians dispersed around the world as a result of the extermination and expulsion from the Ottoman Empire. The second one is the conflict between the Turkish state and the non-Turkish Muslim populations as a result of the assimilation policies. To look into the conflict consequences of those nation-building policies, we will discuss two of the most visible examples – the treatment of the Armenians and the Kurds.

The Armenian genocide is crucial for understanding the specific character of the national identity production by the state. Although the genocide itself took place before the establishment of the Republic, the exclusion of Armenians from the nation-constituting groups cannot be understood without taking into consideration the extermination of the entire Armenian population of Anatolia. After the establishment of the Republic, actions aimed at taking over the property of the non-Muslim populations and redistributing the wealth in favor of the national bourgeoisie can be understood as the continuation of that process. In 1942 with the law on capital tax, the government claimed that non-Muslims had been gaining undeserved income by creating a black market in wartime conditions, and they were obliged to "repay" their undeserved income to the state (Kuyucu 2005). Those who refused to pay or could not pay

were transferred to the working camps. The result of this act, along with similar others, was the transfer of the property of the non-Muslim bourgeoisie to the new national Muslim entrepreneurs (İçduygu, Şule and Soner 2008).

The pogroms of September 6-7 in 1955 can also be regarded in this context. People who were provoked by the discourse and actions of the government attacked and plundered the non-Muslim property and belongings. In addition to the harm to property, non-Muslim people were explicitly threatened, if not killed, during these two nights. After this incident, part of them left the country, and the number of the non-Muslim population decreased dramatically. These incidents can be regarded as examples of how the state was trying to homogenize its political, social, and economic domains while brutally excluding its non-Muslim minorities.

The attitude towards the Armenians in Turkey is not very different today. The assassination of the Agos journalist Hrant Dink in 2007 (Gazeteci Hrant Dink silahlı saldırıda öldü 2007), the murder of Sevag Balıkçı during his military service in 2011 (Armenian private killed intentionally, new testimony shows 2012), the murder of Maritsa Küçük in her home in Samatya in 2012 (Maritsa Küçük nefret suçu kurbanı mı? 2013) are all connected to their Armenian identity. These events reveal the perception of the state and big parts of the society towards Armenians. Although these incidents caused public unrest and protests, they did not shake the structures supporting such attitudes or the indifference of the society at large that also perceives Armenians in particular, and non-Muslims in general, as the "others".

The Kurdish Question is the other major consequence of the state's nation-building policies. The Kurdish revolts that started in the 19th century against the centralization policies of the Ottoman Empire gained a nationalist tendency in the context of the late Ottoman Empire and intensified during the Turkish Republic's national identity construction phase. Whereas the revolts started with the aim of maintaining the religio-tribal structure, they adopted nationalist language later prioritizing demands for identity preservation in reaction to the assimilation policies.

After a series of revolts, the settlement law of 1934 was put into action aimed to control the Kurdish population. By the law, the state had the authority to designate who could move and where they could move (Yavuz 2007). When the state could not suppress the revolts with the help of this law, it resorted to violence, of which the Dersim Massacre in 1938 is a very tragic example. When the state could not repress the revolt in Dersim, it bombed the villages, erased the city from the map, and renamed it as "Tunceli". Incidents similar to Dersim made living in these cities really difficult, if not impossible.

After the *coup d'etat* in 1980, the state adopted even tougher policies towards its Kurdish minority. An unusually high national quota for entrance into the parliament was imposed (10 percent) in order to impede the presence of Kurdish political parties (Çelik 2010). This created a representation problem for the Kurdish-populated cities. Along with the high electoral threshold, Kurdish political parties were also subject to forced closures by the decisions of the constitutional court with the claim that they were a threat to the national integrity of the Turkish state. These and similar practices prevented Kurds from expressing their demands democratically and consequently pushing some of them toward a violent response.

After the military coup and the establishment of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK, in 1978, the conflict became violent. Following the severe violence enclosing the Kurdish-populated regions in particular, in 1987 the state declared martial law, which put 13 cities under extraordinary harsh conditions. This meant that the population in these cities was subject to laws different from the rest of the society living in the other regions of the country (Yavuz 2007). The state of emergency lasted 23 years, was renewed 46 times, and was finally abolished in 2002 following the ascent to power of Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (known by its Turkish acronym AKP).

From the start of the conflict, but mainly after the 1980 *coup d'etat* when the violence escalated, the state used various tools and tactics in order to suppress the Kurdish expression of a distinct identity. After 1985, the state forced people in the villages either to become village guards and to fight on behalf of the state or to leave their homes. Through internal displacement policies, the Kurdish population was sent from their villages or cities to the designated places.

Minority rights in modern Turkey

With the acceleration of the EU accession process in the early 2000s, small steps toward changes started to emerge in this very particular subject. With the Helsinki Summit of the EU in 1999, Turkey was accepted as an official EU candidate. Therefore, eight packages of reforms were implemented in Turkey between the years 2000 and 2004 in order to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and to start the EU negotiation process (International Crisis Group 2011) (Ulusoy 2010) (Kirişçi, National Identity, Asylum and Immigration: EU as a Vehicle of Post-National Transformation in Turkey 2006) (Grigoriadis 2008). Particularly critical was the third reform package enacted in 2002 that abolished the death penalty, allowed broadcasting in languages other than Turkish, and recognized the property rights of non-Muslim foundations (Ulusoy 2010). It would be naive to think that the EU accession process alone could bring civic (post-ethnic) citizenship to Turkey. However, it contributed to the awareness of the ethnically and religiously diverse society, and the policies of multiculturalism (Kirişçi, National Identity, Asylum and Immigration: EU as a Vehicle of Post-National Transformation in Turkey 2006).

Later, in 2009, the government issued a democratic opening package. This package could also be understood as the continuation of the reform packages started with the EU accession process. It aimed to transform the institutional structure of the post-1980 *coup d'etat* regime while, at the same time, broadening the cultural rights of the minorities (Ulusoy 2010). However, the move remained superficial in understanding and resolving the problems of the minorities and the conflicts.

Starting with the reforms in 2002, the new AKP government's discourse on "democratic opening" created hope towards the democratization of Turkey in general and the amelioration of ethnic group rights in particular. However, the extension of the minority rights into the political and cultural scenes remained only as a lip service. At the practical level, we can see only small steps taken in these direction. Turkey is not a signatory of the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the 1997 European Convention on Nationality, or the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe (Grigoriadis 2008).

Having failed to achieve significant progress towards the EU accession, Turkey shifted from committed Europeanization to loose Europeanization and finally to a soft Euro-Asianism (Öniş and Yılmaz 2009). The shift had grave repercussions with respect to the democratization process in general and ethnic group rights in particular and a new cycle of violence in the South East.

Conclusion

Concluding this review, it should be noted that within the framework of this approach it is not possible to address all issues, to convey all the multi-faceted specifics of complex processes, or even to mention all the important cases. The authors of the review did not have such an objective to start with. We saw our goal as focusing on the most urgent and long lasting tendencies that define intergroup relations and collective statuses in the *era of nationalism* or in the era of the so called "interethnic conflicts". The objective was to present an overall parallel description of the situation in all four countries that are connected by regional political, cultural, economic projects, contacts and conflicts. The authors of the review hope that such an approach not only allows the readers to gain insight into the region, but also

provides an opportunity for an interesting comparative analysis. Nevertheless, in conclusion some important trends and aspects that the authors had to leave out from this analysis need to be mentioned.

Migration, diasporas, and conflicts

First of all, the current analysis did not cover migration processes and issues around diasporas were not touched. For all the imagined communities included in this analysis, the 20th century became an era of mass migration – often a forceful displacement of populations as a result of conflicts. The last mass migration of Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani populations following the collapse of the USSR, even though often regarded as economic or work-related, to a certain degree was a forced migration. Economic issues were further exacerbated by the conflicts. Conflicts also instigated migration flows in Turkey after the Second World War. Kurds were leaving their densely populated areas not only in search of jobs, but also with the desire to leave the conflict-stricken areas.

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century was the period of diaspora formation on the basis of migration networks and communities. With the current level of development of communication and access to information beyond state borders, diaspora networks, created by ethnic activists, are increasingly getting involved in the political processes taking place in the countries of origin. Activists of ethno-national diasporas in various forms increasingly participate in conflicts (public events, demonstrations, publications, etc.). Political regimes in the countries of origin use the cross-border trans-nationalism for various goals, including for a most far-reaching representation of "our" version of the conflict and the mobilization of the diaspora. In the case of ethnic groups, such expatriate activities are perceived by the dominant communities as threatening and separatists. This topic is extremely important, but the authors considered that it is worth a separate analysis.

Nationalism and religion

Not all has been said about the imperial heritage and nationalism. The modern history of the region goes back to the middle of the 19th century, when the first intellectuals who sought to disseminate European ideas of nationalism came forward in future Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. For each of the imagined communities that these nation-states were named after, the era of nationalism came at different times. At the same time, a relatively short period from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries was key to the nationalist discourse becoming really influential at least among the intelligentsia[14]. The origins of the politicization of ethnicity and cultural differences belong to the same time period that marks the beginning of new "ethnic conflicts".

In the 20th century, the growing popularity of secular nationalistic ideologies overshadows religious influences, and in some cases or certain periods, religion loses a significant or even the major part of its influence. Yet, religious institutions and discourses largely remain influential, and in recent years are very successfully regaining former positions. Limited with the framework of this review, the authors almost did not touch the subject.

Imperial heritage and nationalism

The large territory that now belongs to Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan was divided between Russian and Ottoman empires up until the beginning of 20th century. The major part of the same century the South Caucasus was part of the Soviet Union. Extended imperial rule on these territories inevitably encourages researches to look for answerers to certain questions guided by the framework of post-colonial theory.

In the 20th century, there is an increased desire in the region to be *European*[15], which leads to the popularity of the Orientalist discourse of dividing the world into East and West among politicians and

intellectuals. At the same time, European and/or Western aspirations encourage legislative reforms following the European model. These include changes of relations between the "majority" and the "minorities". However, authors had to leave the specificity of *post-colonialism* and *European aspirations* out of the scope of this analysis considering these to be topics for a separate article.

It has to be underlined that discourses of nationalism and imperial discourses were always competing with each other in the region. In 2016, on the eve of the 100th anniversary since the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish ruling elite is constructing a new nationalist ideology drawing on the resources of the inheritance of the Sublime Porte. At the same time, many Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani people and even middle-aged and older intellectuals, "cramped" within the borders of small nation states are nostalgic about the Soviet *superpower* and the friendship of nations.

This example of an ambivalent attitude toward imperial power shows that any attempt to talk about nationalist ideologies and discourses as strictly anti-imperial and unchangeable over time inevitably leads to a reduction of very complex and contradictory processes. The content of Georgian, Armenian, Turkish, and Azerbaijani nationalist ideologies and discourses is visibly changing throughout the their one and a half century-long existence. The same mutability applies to the views of intellectuals claiming the right to represent various ethnic groups (Kurds, Lezgins, and others.). Modern nationalism and contemporary situations often have very little in common with the beginning and even the middle of the 20th century.

The key trends

At the same time, there are some more or less constant trends that are outlined in the kaleidoscope of dynamic processes of nation building. One of these extremely important trends that this analysis targeted is the constant domination of the ethno-nationalist ideology, as well as the primordialist and essentialist understanding of ethnicity, culture or group boundaries, and collective rights. At different periods with different political leaders and under different regimes, the need for a radical break from the past was voiced. Although Ataturk's reforms aimed at the construction of an imagined community of Turks were far less bloody, they are still are comparable to the radical experiments of the Bolsheviks. At the time of the collapse of the USSR and to this day, there are calls to break with the Soviet past. However, such appeals are usually not applied to the understanding of the phenomenon of the nation.

Certainly ethnic nationalism never comes in a "pure" form[16]. In this sense, Turkish, Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani nationalisms are not different from other types of ideologies. In all cases, the past legacy with certain changes and modifications continues to influence the present state of affairs. The creation of an ethnically homogeneous Turkey on the remains of the "sick man of Europe" was impossible, given the legacy of imperial diversity. The same way, the policy of "return" to and "revival" of the Ottoman heritage of modern Turkey is a new form of ethnic and religious homogenization of the population that was never pursued by the imperial authorities before the age of nationalism.

The quick homogenization of an ethnically diverse population on the remains of a "Colossus with feet of clay" was also impossible. In the framework of the dominant ethnic nationalism, the pursuit for homogenization was accompanied by violence and armed confrontation already in pre-Soviet years. In order to solve many conflicts that were the legacies of collapsed empires, the ideologists of the Soviet national policy institutionalized rules that contributed to the preservation of group boundaries and individual ethnic identities.

The Soviet project provided ethnic groups with integration either into national republics (into "own" dominant communities) or into Soviet people as a form of a quasi-civil imagined community. As a result, Azerbaijanis and Armenians living in Georgia or Azerbaijanis in Armenia were not trying to invest in the integration into the Georgian and Armenian communities. Especially when the dominant Georgians or Armenians in their turn were not ready to invest in this process. In the Soviet scheme, an Azerbaijani

or an Armenian could never become a Georgian, unless he is an offspring of a mixed marriage. Declarative attempts to make changes to these established practices and representations did not yield any results in almost two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Therefore, nowadays homogenization in the post-Soviet countries means gradual ousting of the ethnic "other", and not their inclusion into a single political community.

In the framework of this analysis, the authors attempted at a critical rethinking of the entire heritage and key trends. The era of nationalism, intensive nation building, and the nationalization of Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, has also become the era of large-scale violence and mass movements of populations. Already mundane practices of politicization of ethnicity and influential threat discourses of ethnic diversity are powerful impediments to the construction of citizenry-based societies. They draw their strength from the continuity of political traditions, influential national discourses, the past manas, and often from the visions of the "fathers of the nations". Such a continuity is difficult to overcome but is not inescapable. The possibility of the transformation of dominant practices and discourses is closely linked with the prospects of a critical rethinking of the phenomenon of the nation. The authors would like to see this article as another, even if a small step in the direction of such a rethinking.

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Endnotes

[1] In the large-scale historical works of Hobsbawm, who undertook an interesting attempt to rethink the historical processes that created the modern world, the long 19th century beginning with the Great French Revolution of 1789 and lasting until the start of the First World War in 1914, is followed by the short 20th century (the age of extremes) that lasted from 1914 to 1991.

[2] "The nation – Stalin wrote in his first scientific work – is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up that is manifested in a common culture" (Slezkine 1996, 203).

[3] The term "primordialism" (primordial – original, aboriginal) is used to indicate an approach in which the nation is a product of the development of ethnic groups, which in their turn, are natural integrities that can be understood by analogy with biological populations. Essentialism (from the Latin *essentia* – essence) often appears as the methodological satellite of primordialism. This method involves the discovery of "the nature of things", the attribution of certain essences, mandatory set of immutable characteristics, qualities and properties to social phenomena. It is the belief that the disclosure of the true nature of the observed phenomenon is the aim of science and is achievable with certain theories and approaches. The belief in the existence of such essential knowledge puts it above criticism. (Malakhov 2005, 52-58)

[4] Anderson stated the following in regard to the nation: "This is an imagined political community, and it is imagined as something inevitably limited, but at the same time, sovereign. It is imagined, since the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow brothers in the nation, will never meet them, or even hear of them, whereas in the minds of each of them lives the image of their community" (Anderson 1998, 6). It is necessary to present Benedict Anderson's entire definition of a nation, because the common and misplaced criticism of Anderson's definition (or, according to Malakhov, the vulgarization of his approach) stems from the hasty assumption that the very designation of "imagined communities" (as well as the methodological terms "construct" and "construction") testifies to Anderson's denial of the existence of the nation as a real entity.

[5] *Hayastantsi* derives from *Hayastan* (Armenian for "Armenia"). *Akhpar* is both a pejorative and endearing term for Diaspora Armenians and a slight corruption of *akhper*, the Armenian colloquial word for "brother".

[6] As a result of the confrontation between Azerbaijanis and Georgians in the districts of Bolnisi and Marneuli, demands to create a Borchali autonomy were voiced.

[7] In Samtskhe-Javakheti, the "Javakhk" movement was an example of such an organization whose main goal was the protection of the rights of the Armenian population. Today, the representatives of the local organizations "Javakhk" and "Virk" occasionally voice demands for the establishment of an autonomy. At the same time, the influence of these organizations significantly decreased after the closure of the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki.

[8] In 2012 as a result of the parliamentary elections, a new parliament was formed and the cabinet was approved. It was formed by the "Georgian Dream" coalition that received 54.97 percent of the votes (Jones, Democracy in Georgia: Da Capo? 2013) (Fairbanks and Gugushvili 2013).

[9] It should be noted that the "1+4" state program allows students to learn the Georgian language for one year after they pass the university entrance exams in their native language. Upon the successfully completion of the one-year course, students begin their studies in the first year of an undergraduate degree. The program was initiated in 2010.

[10] See for example (Sərdarov 2008) and (Abaskuliyeva 2010).

[11] Other examples of the construction of such discourses and analytical schemes are the work of Arif Yunusov, another political scientist and historian well-known in Azerbaijan (Yunusov 2007, 148-169) and sociologist Aliaga Mammadli (Mammadli, Sovremennyye etnokul'turnyye protsessy v Azerbaydzhane: osnovnyye tendentsii i perspektivy. 2008) (Mammadli, Soviet-Era Anthropology by Azerbaijani Scholars 2011).

[12] It would make more sense if the Turkish Republic is thought of as the continuation of the Ottoman Empire. Otherwise, if this process is disrupted, it would hinder the comprehension of the main issues of Turkish nationalism.

[13] Although the genocide and the mass killings took place before the establishment of the Turkish Republic, they can be regarded within the context of national identity construction of the republic. Turkish nationalism emerged before the establishment of the Republic; it is a process that dates back to the late Ottoman Empire.

[14] The degree of influence was different for Georgians, Armenians, Turks, and Azerbaijanis (at that point Turkic muslims). The order of the mentioned communities conditionally reflects the growing popularity of the ideas of nationalism in each of them – from highest to lowest.

[15] In some cases, such as in Georgia, it became the core of the political activity and state ideology.

[16] When specifying the type of nationalism, there is always the choice of the theoretical model that allows researchers to provide a framework for the analysis. In the "pure" form, there is no civil or ethnic, or any other type of nationalism. In practice, the researcher always has to deal with some "mixed" situation and should speak only about the dominance of one or the other type. The most common version of what constitutes a nation that is widely accepted in the official discourses of the Turkish, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, as well as the dominant discourses of the Kurdish, Lezgin, and others nationalisms,

always was the understanding of the nation as "blood and land" and not as a political community. Until now, any attempt aimed at the construction of a national community as co-citizenship failed due to ethno-nationalist views rooted in the minds of the elites and ordinary people.